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PLACES

HELENA AUGUSTA AND THE CITY OF ROME*

Jan Willem DRIJVERS

Flavia Iulia Helena Augusta, mother of Emperor Constantine the Great (306–37), is associated with many cities: Drepanum, Naissus, Trier, Reims, Colchester, Constantinople, Bethlehem and Edessa. However, foremost among the cities that have connections with the empress are Jerusalem, where she is alleged to have found the ‘true’ cross (i.e. the cross of Christ), and Rome where she probably lived after her son had conquered the city in the battle at the Milvian bridge on 28 October 312. Helena clearly left her mark on the eternal city and there are several mementos which remind both the tourist and the scholar of the sojourn of the *augusta* in the city. She figures prominently next to Bishop Sylvester and her son Constantine in the Rome-based Sylvester legend which includes the story of her *inventio crucis*; frescoes in the Sylvester Chapel of Ss. Quattro Coronati display her looking for the cross at Golgotha. The Scala Sancta (the alleged stairs of the *praetorium* of Pontius Pilate) are supposed to have been brought to Rome by Helena, an immense statue (by Andrea Bolgi and dated to 1639) of Helena holding a large cross and three nails has a prominent position in the northwest pier in the crossing under the dome of St Peter’s Basilica, her porphyry sarcophagus is shown in the Vatican Museums, and (part of her) relics have been kept in S. Maria in Ara-coeli since the twelfth century.

The discovery of the cross of Christ in Jerusalem made Helena famous, even though the cross was never found by her and the event was only ascribed to her posthumously. Nevertheless, the *inventio crucis* made her a saint of the Church.¹ As discoverer of the cross she is described in late antique and medieval narratives and she is often depicted holding a cross – in the Greek east often together with her son Constantine with the cross between them. However, this contribution is not about the legendary tradition of Helena as discoverer of the cross and Helena as saint of the Church about which a considerable number

of publications have seen the light of day in the last two to three decades,² but focuses on her connection with the city of Rome during her lifetime. Also this topic is not *terra incognita* but justifies consideration in the light of recent publications, in particular Sible de Blaauw’s 1997 article *Jerusalem in Rome and the Cult of the Cross* in which he pays special attention to the Church of S. Croce in Gerusalemme, the preservation of a cross relic in this early church, and Helena’s association with it.³ Apart from a few literary sources, in particular the *Liber pontificalis* dated to the years 515–30 but based on earlier writings, epigraphic and material sources are available for reconstructing Helena’s association with Rome.

It has generally been accepted that Helena spent part of her life in the city of Rome and resided there formally, although the sources do not contain references about Helena’s residence in Rome, apart perhaps from an implicit remark by Eusebius that after her death she was with a great guard of honour carried up to the imperial city and buried there in the imperial tombs.⁴ Although it has sometimes been argued that Eusebius’s imperial city refers to Constantinople, this cannot be the case because by the time of Helena’s death in c. 328–29 the new eastern capital was not yet inaugurated and did not yet have an imperial mausoleum.⁵ Eusebius can therefore only refer to Rome where on the basis of epigraphic and material evidence Helena’s presence and close connection with the city can be reasonably surmised.

Helena was buried in a mausoleum at the third mile of the Via Labicana (now Via Casilina) outside Rome. The mausoleum, a domed rotunda and known by its popular name of Torpignattara, was attached to the cemeterial Basilica of Ss. Marcellino e Pietro and is the first example of a funerary monument associated with a martyr church, thereby indicating the association between the Constantinian family and Christianity. Constantine built both

the church and the mausoleum, probably in the period between 315 and 327. The mausoleum may have been intended initially for the emperor, although it cannot be excluded that it was planned for Helena from the beginning. The *Liber pontificalis* reports that Constantine donated rich gifts to the mausoleum in love and honour of his mother.⁶ The same source mentions that the empress' body was placed in a porphyry sarcophagus carved with medallions and images of cavalrymen. The sarcophagus, now in the Museo Pio-Clementino of the Vatican Museums, was clearly not designed for Helena since the decoration was not suitable for a woman. It has often been assumed that the coffin was originally intended for Constantine himself or his father Constantius Chlorus. Recently it has been suggested that the sarcophagus was made for Maxentius and was readily available because it had remained unused.⁷

The area of Ss. Marcellino e Pietro and Helena's mausoleum were part of the territory called *fundus Laurentus* or *fundus Lauretum*. This was a large imperial domain extending from the Porta Sessoriana (modern Porta Maggiore) southward to Mount Gabus and bounded by the Via Praenestina and Via Latina. The *Liber pontificalis* reports that the whole area once was in possession of Helena: 'fundum Laurentum iuxta formam balneum et omnem agrum a porta Sessoriana usque ad via Penestrina a via itineris Latinae usque ad montem Gabum, possessio Augustae Helenae, praest. sol. TCXX'.⁸ On the *fundus Laurentus* was located the territory of *ad duas lauros*, also mentioned by the *Liber pontificalis*,⁹ and known as the burial site of the *equites singulares*, an army unit which had their military barracks at the site of S. Giovanni in Laterano. The *equites singulares* were dissolved as a unit by Constantine after his victory over Maxentius in 312 and their barracks destroyed.

When exactly Helena came into possession of the *fundus Laurentus* is not known but it must have been after 312. The property contained a suburban villa, named *Palatium Sessorianum* since at least c. 300. An inscription (painted *graffito*) found in 1955 in the Via Eleniana and probably dating from the end of the third or beginning of the fourth century, has the words

SESSOR or SESSORI and most likely refers to the palace.¹⁰ The *Palatium Sessorianum* or *Sessorium* was located just within the Aurelian wall in the south-east corner of the city. This part of the city was known for its *horti* of which several are known by name (*Horti Maecenatis*, *Horti Lamiani*, *Horti Tauriani*). The area of the *Sessorium* was formerly known as the *Horti Spei Veteris* and imperial property since at least the end of the second century. Apart from living quarters, the complex of the *Sessorium* consisted of an amphitheatre (*Amphitheatrum Castrense*) of which remains are still clearly visible to this day; it was to all likelihood used for private gladiatorial shows for the imperial family and its entourage as well as for the *equites singulares*. The complex furthermore contained a circus (*Circus Varianus*) and public baths, known as *Thermae Helenae*.¹¹ During recent excavations in the area part of the circus as well as cisterns for the *Thermae Helenae* have been discovered.¹²

Helena's engagement with the area is expressed by four inscriptions which have been found close to the *Sessorium*.¹³ The first inscription to be discussed was inscribed on a marble base carrying originally a statue of Helena, and found in the vineyard of S. Croce in Gerusalemme in 1571.¹⁴ It mentions Helena as mother of Constantine and grandmother of the Caesars Constantinus and Constantius. Helena is addressed as Augusta, a title which she received in the autumn of 324.¹⁵ Because Crispus, Constantine's oldest son and Caesar since 1 March 317,¹⁶ is not mentioned the inscription must have been set up after May 326, the date of Crispus's death. The inscription and accompanying statue was dedicated to Helena by Iulius Maximilianus, a *vir clarissimus* (indicating that he belonged to the senatorial aristocracy) and a *comes*. Since the reign of Constantine a *comes* was a functionary in the imperial service who could be entrusted with a wide range of functions, both civic and military; it could also be an honorary title.¹⁷ Although the identity of Iulius Maximilianus is not quite evident, it seems more than likely that he is identical with the *consularis aquarum* to whom Constantine addressed a law on the care of aqueducts, dated 18 May 330.¹⁸ In his capacity as *consularis aquarum* he may have been involved

in the water supply of the bathhouse restored by Helena (see below).

Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum (hereafter *CIL*), VI 36950, may also have been dedicated by Iulius Maximilianus.¹⁹ Only three fragments (of which two survive) of the inscription have been discovered in a wall in the area of the Sessorian Palace at the beginning of the twentieth century. Based on *CIL*, VI 1134, the inscription is reconstructed but its contents remain hypothetical and therefore debatable.

We possess more certainty about the contents of *CIL*, VI 1135. Like the previous two texts it is a commemorative inscription inscribed on a now lost base.²⁰ The inscription was discovered in the Sancta Sanctorum close to S. Giovanni in Laterano. Because Helena is addressed as Augusta this inscription is also to be dated after 324. Unfortunately, apart from this epigraphical evidence, nothing more is known about Flavius Pistius who dedicated the inscription and statue to Helena.²¹ He was a *vir perfectissimus* and as such belonging to the *ordo equester*, and a *praepositus rerum privatarum*. *Praepositi* of the *res privata* were in charge of particular imperial properties such as lands, estates, herds, stables (presumably the imperial stud farms) and the imperial transport service.²² Pistius's motivation for setting up a base and statue in honour of Helena remains unclear, but it may be that he was in charge of the Sessorian Palace and the property owned by Helena, i.e. the *fundus Laurentus*.

CIL, VI 1136, reports Helena's rebuilding of a bathhouse. The inscription is incomplete and only five fragments have been preserved.²³ Since these were found close to S. Croce in Gerusalemme it is most likely that the bathhouse in question was part of the Sessorian Palace complex, and was commonly known as the *Thermae Helenae*. The inscription was probably originally located at an entrance of the bathhouse. Since Helena is called grandmother of Caesars the *postquem* date is 1 March 317 when Constantine's sons Crispus and Constantinus were nominated Caesars. Helena is not named Augusta as in the other inscriptions which may indicate that the text was set up before 324.

All four inscriptions seem to be connected with the (re)construction of an aqueduct, the

so-called *Aqua Augustea*. This aqueduct ran through the area of the Sessorian Palace and was possibly also built under the patronage of Helena to supply the water for the *Thermae Helenae*.²⁴ Both Iulius Maximilianus, as *consularis aquarum*, and Flavius Pistius, as overseer of the area of the *Sessorium* and the *fundus Laurentus*, should have been closely involved in the (re)construction work of both the bathhouse and the aqueduct. Maximilianus's statues for Helena accompanied by the commemorative inscriptions are likely to have been set up at the restored bathing facility. Pistius's statue for the empress was probably erected at the nearby Lateran estate, where fragments of the dedicatory inscription have been found. That the four inscriptions were connected to the water supply of the rebuilt bathing complex at the *Palatium Sessorianum*, although hypothetical, makes good sense.

Although not certain, it is very likely that the Sessorian Palace was Helena's residence in Rome. Supposedly by 326 when the city was the scene for the grand celebrations of Constantine's *Vicennalia* she had been living there for many years.²⁵ How many years is hard to establish. Considering her patronage for the area, based on the epigraphical evidence, we can only establish Helena's association with the area after 1 March 317.²⁶

In addition to Helena's patronage and benevolence of the area surrounding her Sessorian Palace, Helena is also associated with St Peter's Basilica. The *Liber pontificalis* refers to a large golden cross among the benefactions of Constantine to the new basilica bearing the following inscription:²⁷

Constantinus Augustus et Helena Augusta [...] hanc domum regalem simile fulgore coruscans aula circumdat

Constantine Augustus and Helena Augusta [...] This royal house is surrounded with an aula that shines with like brightness

Very little is known about this lost cross apart from the reference in the *Liber* and the fact that it was placed above the tomb of St Peter. It might have been donated by the imperial pair

in 326 when Constantine visited Rome for the celebration of his *Vicennalia*.²⁸ However, there are also serious doubts about this. Glen Bowersock, who doubts the authenticity of the *Liber pontificalis* and hence questions Constantine's involvement with the foundation of St Peter's, makes the interesting suggestion that the cross was originally donated to the Sessorian Palace. The *domus regalis*, royal palace, mentioned in the inscription is, according to Bowersock, a reference to the *Palatium Sessorianum*. Only later was the cross moved to St Peter's.²⁹ This is not at all an improbable scenario. Thanks to Sible de Blaauw's acute observations it seems that the Basilica of S. Croce in Gerusalemme, the former aula of the Sessorian Palace, had become a *memoria* for relics of the cross.³⁰ Even though the golden cross is not mentioned in the *Liber pontificalis* as a donation to S. Croce in Gerusalemme, it would fit perfectly well into a newly founded church dedicated to the veneration of the cross.

This brings us to the difficult question of the date of the transformation of the aula of the *Sessorium* into S. Croce in Gerusalemme and its connection with relics of the cross. On this De Blaauw has made valuable observations in the above mentioned paper. Our most important source is again the *Liber pontificalis*:

Eodem tempore fecit Constantinus Augustus basilicam in palatio Sossorianum, ubi etiam de ligno sanctae Crucis domini nostri Iesu Christi posuit et in auro et gemmis conclusit, ubi et nomen ecclesiae dedicavit, quae cognominatur usque in hodiernum diem Ierusalem.³¹

If we are to believe this information, and there seems no reason not to, the Emperor Constantine transformed part of the Sessorian Palace into a basilica where he deposited relics of the cross in a container of gold and beset with precious stones (probably a *staurotheca*). Since the cross was discovered in Jerusalem the church was called 'Ierusalem'. The words 'Eodem tempore' are not clear but the change of function of part of the palace into a church must have happened after the cross was found. Narratives which originated in the second half of the fourth century report that the cross was dis-

covered at the site of Christ's tomb and nearby Golgotha. These narratives ascribe the discovery of the cross to Helena; she visited Palestine in the years 327-28 as we know from the *Vita Constantini* composed by Eusebius at the end of the 330s.³² Eusebius reports also that Constantine had given orders to have a grand basilica built in Jerusalem at the site of Christ's resurrection, i.e. his tomb and nearby Golgotha, where a temple of Aphrodite had stood since the second century. The construction of this Church of the Holy Sepulchre started in the second half of the 320s and the church was officially inaugurated in 335. The building of the basilica involved the demolishment of the Aphrodite sanctuary and excavation works to lay bare Christ's tomb. It is not unlikely that during this process beams of wood were discovered which were considered to be parts of the cross on which Christ had died. We know from a letter by Cyril, Bishop of Jerusalem (c. 349-87), addressed to Emperor Constantius (337-61) and dated to the year 351, that the cross was found during Constantine's reign and from catechetical lectures of the same Cyril that relics of the cross had already been widely distributed all over the Mediterranean by the mid-fourth century.³³ It is thus not at all impossible that cross relics arrived in Rome in the late 320s or early 330s at the instigation of Constantine and were deposited in the Sessorian Palace. On that occasion the aula of the palace changed function and became a church. Even though architectural and epigraphical evidence dates the transformation of the *Sessorium* to the fourth century 'architectural adaptation could have been undertaken years after the actual change of function'.³⁴ The instalment of a cross relic in the new church in this period makes Rome one of the first cities after Jerusalem where we find a cult of the cross. The cross relic connects the new church and the city of Rome in general to Jerusalem and serves therefore as a *memoria*. The name Ierusalem for the basilica is thus understandable.

As De Blaauw observes (p. 62) it is noteworthy that Helena's name is absent in the foundation report and early history of S. Croce.³⁵ Noteworthy, because the palace complex was her possession and she probably lived there,

and because tradition since the second half of the fourth century associates Helena, and not Constantine, with the (discovery of the) cross. These associations have led to suppositions that Helena, who is considered (justly or not) a devout Christian, herself changed part of her palace into a chapel or personally brought a relic of the cross to Rome following her journey to Palestine, and subsequently changed the aula of her palace into a church.³⁶ However, such assumptions lack any historical foundation. Only when Helena was associated with the finding of the cross in later traditions and these traditions became known in the west, and also in Rome – which only happened around the year 400 – is she connected to the church in the *Palatium Sessorianum*. Surprisingly, the earliest reference to Helena's *translatio* of a cross relic to Rome only dates from around 1100, and does not concern S. Croce but the Lateran basilica. Only in the fifteenth century do sources mention that Helena had brought cross relics to S. Croce.³⁷

There is no conclusive evidence for Helena's residence in Rome but her possession of the *fundus Laurentus* including the *Palatium Sessorianum*, her patronage of the area, and her burial in the mausoleum at Ss. Marcellino e Paulo makes it very plausible that she resided in the Sessorian Palace at least from 317 onwards. The imperial

presence in the south-east corner of the city was strong. Not only was Helena probably living in the *Sessorium*, but Fausta, her daughter-in-law and wife of Constantine, may have lived nearby in the so-called *domus Faustae*.³⁸ The Constantinian presence and interest in this part of the city is furthermore expressed by the construction of the Lateran Basilica, the first church of Rome and the *cathedra* of the bishop of Rome, by Constantine. This area of the city exemplified a close association between the Constantinian family and the Christian faith. Helena's residence in Rome as well as that of Constantine's wife Fausta, his sister Constantia (after 324), and possibly other female members of the imperial family is likely to have embodied the imperial presence in Rome in the absence of permanent residence of the emperor himself and other male members of the imperial house. Helena must therefore have been a prominent inhabitant of Rome with considerable influence, in particular after her son had made her *augusta* at the end of 324. Posthumously, the public memory of Helena and her fame remained alive in Rome. Her association with Jerusalem and the discovery of the cross had a particular impact on the city of Rome and left traces that are still noticeable today.

Notes

* I like to thank Meaghan McEvoy for her critical comments on an earlier draft of this paper and for correcting my English.

1 In the Latin Church her saint's day is celebrated on 18 August. In the Eastern Church it is connected to the feast day of Constantine: 21 May. The celebration of the discovery of the cross is on 14 September.

2 e.g. Stefan Heid, 'Der Ursprung der Helena-Legende im Pilgerbetrieb Jerusalems', *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum*, 32 (1989), 41–71; Stephan Borgehammar, *How the Holy Cross was Found: From Event to Medieval Legend* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1991); Jan Willem Drijvers, *Helena Augusta: The Mother of Constantine the Great and the Legend of Her Finding of the True Cross* (Leiden: Brill 1992); Han J. W. Drijvers and Jan Willem Drijvers, *The Finding of the True Cross: The Judas Kyriakos Legend in Syriac. Introduction, Text and Translation*, CSCO, 565, Subs. 93 (Leuven: Peeters 1997); Stefan Heid, 'Kreuz Christi: Titulus Crucis und das Heilige Grab in neu-

esten Publikationen', *Forum Katholische Theologie*, 17 (2001), 161–78; Barbara Baert, *A Heritage of Holy Wood: The Legend of the True Cross in Text and Image* (Leiden: Brill, 2004); Holger A. Klein, 'Constantine, Helena, and the Cult of the True Cross in Constantinople', in *Byzance et les reliques du Christ*, ed. by Jan-nic Durand and Bernard Flusin, Monographies, 17 (Paris: Centre de recherche d'histoire et civilisation de Byzance, 2004), pp. 31–59; Jan Willem Drijvers, 'Helena Augusta, Cross and Myth: Some New Reflections', *Millennium: Yearbook on the Culture and History of the First Millennium CE*, 8 (2011), 125–74.

3 Sible de Blaauw, 'Jerusalem in Rome and the Cult of the Cross', in *Pratum Romanum: Richard Krautheimer zum 100. Geburtstag*, ed. by Renate L. Colella and others (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1997), pp. 55–73.

4 *Vita Constantini* (hereafter *VC*), III. 47. 1: 'πλείστη γοῦν δορυφορία τιμώμενον ἐπὶ τὴν βασιλεύουσαν πόλιν ἀνεκομίζετο, ἐνταυθοῖ τε ἡρίοις βασιλικαῖς ἀπετίθετο'. Date and place of her death are not mentioned in the

- source but since coinage with her name and portrait suddenly ended early in 329, she probably died late in 328 or in the first days or weeks of 329. Constantine was in Trier at the time and since Eusebius mentions that she died in her son's presence (*VC* III. 46. 2) she may have died in this northern imperial residence; Timothy D. Barnes, *Constantine, Religion and Power in the Later Roman Empire* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), pp. 43–44. From there her body was transported with a large military escort to Rome.
- 5 For the Helena tradition in Constantinople, see Hans A. Pohlsander, *Helena: Empress and Saint* (Chicago: Ares, 1995), pp. 139–48.
 - 6 *Liber pontificalis* (hereafter *LP*), XXXVIII, c. 26: 'eisdem temporibus fecit Augustus Constantinus basilicam beatis martyribus Marcellino presbitero et Petro exorcistae in territorio inter duas lauros et mysileum ubi mater ipsius sepulta est Helena Augusta, via Lavicana, miliario III [...]'. On the mausoleum, see Friedrich Wilhelm Deichmann and Arnold Tschira, 'Das Mausoleum der Kaiserin Helena und die Basilika der Heiligen Marcellinus und Petrus an der Via Labicana vor Rom', *Jahrbuch des deutschen archäologischen Instituts*, 72 (1957), 44–110; Jürgen J. Rasch, *Das Mausoleum der Kaiserin Helena in Rom und der 'Tempio della Tosse' in Tivoli* (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1998); Mark J. Johnson, 'Where were Constantius I and Helena Buried?', *Latomus*, 51 (1992), 145–50; Mark J. Johnson, *The Roman Imperial Mausolea in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 110–18.
 - 7 Johnson, *The Roman Imperial Mausolea*, p. 118.
 - 8 *LP* XXXVIII, c. 27. J. Guyon, 'Helenae Augustae Possessio', in *Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae. Suburbium*, ed. by Adriano La Regina and others, 5 vols (Rome: Edizioni Quasar, 2001–08), III (2005), pp. 44–45.
 - 9 Louis Duchesne, *Le Liber pontificalis: texte, introduction et commentaire*, 2 vols (Paris: Thorin, 1886–92), I (1886), 183, n. 91.
 - 10 Robert Coates-Stephens, *Porta Maggiore. Monument and Landscape* (Rome: Bretschneider, 2004), p. 105. See also Silvia Orlandi, 'Elena e Santa Croce in Gerusalemme', forthcoming in conference proceedings *Costantino e i luoghi sacri*. I am grateful to Prof. Orlandi for giving me the opportunity of reading her paper before publication.
 - 11 For the palace complex see in general: Federico Guidobaldi, 'Sessorium', in *Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae*, IV (1999), pp. 304–08; *La Basilica di S. Croce in Gerusalemme a Roma quando l'antico è futuro*, ed. by Anna Maria Affanni (Viterbo: BetaGamma, 1997).
 - 12 For recent archaeological research of the area see Elisabetta Borgia, Donato Colli, Sergio Palladino and Claudia Paterna, 'Horti Spei Veteris e Palatium Sessorianum': Nuove acquisizioni da interventi urbani 1996–2008. Parte I', *The Journal of Fasti Online*, 124 (2008), 1–17 in *Fasti Online Documents & Research* <<http://www.fastionline.org/docs/FOLDER-it-2008-124.pdf>> [accessed 25 June 2016] and *ibid.*, 'Parte II', *The Journal of Fasti Online*, 125 (2008), 18–41 in *Fasti Online Documents & Research* <<http://www.fastionline.org/docs/FOLDER-it-2008-125.pdf>> [accessed 25 June 2016].
 - 13 For an overview and discussion of all Helena inscriptions see Isabel Lasala Navarro, 'Epigrafía 'Helenae': Compendio, Análisis y Conclusiones', *Epigraphica*, 71 (2009), 243–51.
 - 14 *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* (hereafter *CIL*), VI 1134 = *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae* (hereafter *ILS*), 709 = *Epigraphic Database Rome* (hereafter *EDR*), 118180: 'Dominae nostrae Fl(aviae) Iul(iae) [sic] | Helenae, piissimae Aug(ustae), | genetrici d(omini) n(ostri) Constan|tini maximi, victoris, | clementis-simi, semper | Augusti, aviae Constan|tini et Constan|tini simor[um] ac florentis|simorum Caesarum. | Iulius Maximilianus, v(ir) c(larissimus), comes, | pietati eius semper dicatis'. See also *Last Statues of Antiquities Database* (hereafter *LSA*), no. 835 <<http://laststatues.classics.ox.ac.uk/database/detail.php?record=LSA-835>> [accessed 25 June 2016]. The base is now in the Helena Chapel of S. Croce in Gerusalemme.
 - 15 Drijvers, *Helena Augusta*, p. 39.
 - 16 Timothy D. Barnes, *The New Empire of Diocletian and Constantine* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), p. 7.
 - 17 Arnold H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire. A Social, Economic and Administrative Survey*, 2 vols (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1964), I, pp. 104–05.
 - 18 *Codex Theodosianus*, xv. 2. 1: 'Imp. Constantinus a. ad Maximilianum consularem aquarum'; *Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire* (hereafter *PLRE*), I Maximilianus 2. It is unlikely that he is identical with the *vir clarissimus* and *praefectus vigilibus* AV (Avianus or Aurelius) Maximilianus mentioned in *CIL* VI 233 = *EDR* 142293 as proposed by *PLRE* I Maximilianus 1 and Robert Sablayrolles, *Libertinus miles – les cohortes vigiles* (Rome: École française de Rome, 1996), p. 519, n. 40.
 - 19 *CIL* VI 36950 = *EDR* 071921. 'D(ominae) n(ostreae), piissi[mae] ac venerabili | Aug(ustae), Fl(aviae) [Iul(iae)] Helenae, genetrici | [d(omini) n(ostri) Constantini maximi, victo] | [ris ac trium]fatoris, sem[per] | [Augusti, aviae d]d(ominorum) nn(ostorum) Const[an] | [tini et Cons]tanti, bea[tissi] | [morum ac florentissimorum] | [Caesaru]m. | [Iul]ius M[aximilianus, v(ir) c(larissimus)], | [com]es, dica[tissimus] excellen | [tiae pietatique eius]'. *LSA*, no. 1540.
 - 20 *CIL* VI 1135 = *EDR* 128962. 'Dominae nostrae venerabili | Helenae Augustae, | genetrici d(omini) n(ostri) Constantini, maximi, | victoris et triumphatoris, semper Augusti. | [F]l(avius) Pi[st]ius, v(ir) p(erfectissimus), p(rae)p(ositus) rerum privatarum, | pietati eorum semper devotissimus'. *LSA*, no. 1261.

- 21 *PLRE* 1 (F)l. Pi(st)ius.
- 22 Jones, I, pp. 412, 414; Roland Delmaire, *Largesses sacrées et 'res privata'*. *L'aerarium impérial et son administration du IV^e au VI^e siècle* (Rome: École française de Rome, 1989), pp. 216–17.
- 23 *CIL* VI 1136 = *EDR*, 111326. 'D(omina) n(ostra) Helena ven[erabilis do]mini [n(o)stri Constantini A]ug(usti) mater e[t] avia beatis[simor(um) et flore]ntiss[simor(um) Caesarum nostr]oru[m] [therm[as incendio de]stru[ctas restituit]'. The reconstructed inscription is now in the Sala a Croce Greca of the Museo Pio-Clementino in the Vatican Museums. See also Marianne Bergmann, 'Zur Bauinschriften der Helenathermen', in *Studien zur Spätantiken und Byzantinischen Kunst*, Friedrich Wilhelm Deichmann gewidmet, ed. by Otto Feld and Urs Peschlow, 3 vols (Bonn: Habelt, 1986), I, pp. 265–70.
- 24 Joseph F. Merriman, 'The Empress Helena and the Aqua Augustea', *Archeologia Classica*, 29 (1977), 436–46 (pp. 441–43).
- 25 Timothy D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), pp. 220–21.
- 26 Cf. Paul Stephenson, *Constantine: Unconquered Emperor, Christian Victor* (London: Quercus, 2009), p. 326, who, without presenting any evidence, mentions that the Sessorian Palace was Constantine's residence while in Rome and that he only donated it to his mother in 326.
- 27 *LP* XXXIII, c. 17.
- 28 Richard Gem, 'From Constantine to Constans: The Chronology of the Construction of Saint Peter's Basilica', in *Old Saint Peter's, Rome*, ed. by Rosamond McKitterick and others (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013) pp. 35–64 (pp. 38–39, 62). Rudolf Egger, 'Das Goldkreuz am Grabe Petri', *Anzeiger der phil.-hist. Klasse der österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, 12 (1959), 182–202.
- 29 Glen W. Bowersock, 'Peter and Constantine', in *St. Peter's in the Vatican*, ed. by William Tronzo (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 5–15 (pp. 9–11). Bowersock dates the construction of St Peter's to the reign of Constantine's son Constans (337–50). Cf., however, Paolo Liverani, 'Old St. Peter's and the Emperor Constans? A debate with G. W. Bowersock', *Journal of Roman Archaeology*, 28 (2015), 485–504; Liverani argues against Bowersock and favours Constantine's paternity of St Peter's; he also doubts whether the cross was originally placed in S. Croce since in that case the inscription would have had *palatium regalis* and not *domus regalis* (pp. 489–90). Richard Westall, 'Constantius II and the Basilica of St Peter in the Vatican', *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte*, 64, 2 (2015), 205–42 (pp. 223–24, even prefers a later date for the foundation of St Peter's than Glen Bowersock, namely the years 357–59 under the reign of Constantius II).
- 30 De Blaauw, pp. 66–72.
- 31 *LP* XXXIII, c. 22.
- 32 *VC* III. 41–44.
- 33 Cyril of Jerusalem, *Epistula ad Constantius*, III; *Catechetical Lectures*, IV. 10, X. 19, and XIII. 4.
- 34 De Blaauw, p. 59. See also Holger A. Klein, *Byzanz, das Westen und das 'wahre' Kreuz: Die Geschichte einer Reliquie und ihrer künstlerischen Fassung in Byzanz und im Abendland* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2004), p. 69.
- 35 The earliest written evidence of Helena's association with the church dates from the first half of the sixth century, when the *Gesta Xysti*, which are included in the *Liber pontificalis*, refer to it as *basilica Heleniana quae dicitur Sessorianum*; Duchesne, I (1886), p. 180, n. 79.
- 36 Richard Krautheimer, *Three Christian Capitals* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), p. 129, n. 16: '[there is] no reason to doubt the tradition of Helena having brought to her Roman palace the relic of the cross from her pilgrimage to the Holy Land'; Sandra A. Fortner and Andrea Rottloff, *Auf den Spuren der Kaiserin Helena: Römische Aristokratinnen pilgern ins Heilige Land* (Erfurt: Sutton, 2000), p. 91.
- 37 De Blaauw, pp. 65–66.
- 38 Margherita Guarducci, 'Nuove testimonianze per la "Domus Faustae"', *Archeologia Classica*, 24 (1972), 386–92; Margherita Guarducci, 'La "domus Faustae" in Laterano e la Cattedra di San Pietro in Vaticano', in Feld and Peschlow, I, pp. 249–63. Cf. Paolo Liverani, "'Domus Faustae'", in *Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae*, II (1995), pp. 97–99, who seriously doubts whether the *domus Faustae* belonged to Constantine's wife; also Paolo Liverani, 'L'area Lateranense in età tardoantica e le origini del patriarcato', *Mélanges de l'Ecole Française de Rome – Antiquité*, 116 (2004), 17–49 (pp. 22–23).

